

RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1957.

Index numbers of retail prices for the March quarter of 1957 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases^a,
March Quarter, 1957.

City.	Aggregate All Groups.			All Groups, excluding Price Move- ments in Potatoes and Onions.		
	Index Number.	Increase from-		Index Number.	Increase from-	
		March Qtr., 1956.	Dec. Qtr., 1956.		March Qtr., 1956.	Dec. Qtr., 1956.
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2321	2.7	-0.6	2330	4.3	1.1
Toowoomba ..	2358	2.7	-1.0	2372	4.7	1.0
Rockhampton	2360	2.8	-0.4	2364	4.4	1.0
Townsville	2447	2.5	0.1	2454	4.1	1.4
Bundaberg ..	2304	2.4	-0.6	2311	4.0	1.4
Warwick ..	2300	2.0	-1.4	2311	3.7	0.8

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Potatoes and onions returned to more normal prices during the March quarter of 1957 after their very high level recorded in the September quarter of 1956 and a partial return towards normal prices in the December quarter. As a result, the gap between the "C" Series index (all groups) and the "C" Series index (excluding potatoes and onions) was closed. The index (excluding potatoes and onions) for Brisbane rose by 1.1 per cent. during the quarter, rises of approximately this magnitude being shown by each of the separate groups - food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and miscellaneous items. In the complete index (all groups) the fall in the prices of potatoes and onions more than offset the rises in other commodity prices, and the index decreased by 0.6 per cent. Changes in the index numbers in other Queensland cities were similar to those in Brisbane, except in Townsville where the fall in potato and onion prices was not sufficient to off-set completely the price increases in other commodities, and the index (all groups) rose by 0.1 per cent.

Average price movements, excluding the recent erratic fluctuations of potatoes and onions, continued to follow an upward trend which has operated fairly steadily since mid-1954. The average quarterly increase in the index number (excluding potatoes and onions) for Brisbane from the September quarter of 1954 to the end of 1956 was 0.8 per cent., compared with 1.1 per cent. in the March quarter of 1957; so, in the last two quarters, in order to provide an indication of the recent trend of the index in respect of items not materially affected by the seasonal factors just mentioned, an All Groups Index and a Food and Groceries Index, both excluding the effects of recent movements in the prices of potatoes and onions have again been prepared, and are shown in addition to the usual complete index numbers on page 4 of this bulletin.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases^a, March Quarter, 1957.

City.	Food and Groceries.			Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1956.		From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1956.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1956.
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	207.4	-3.0	1.0	289.0	1.0	135.8	1.2
Toowoomba ..	232.3	-3.4	1.4	292.3	1.2	131.1	0.5
Rockhampton	195.4	-2.4	1.1	286.6	1.2	143.0	0.9
Townsville	189.4	-1.7	1.2	288.3	1.1	146.7	1.7
Bundaberg ..	193.7	-3.5	1.2	287.6	0.9	134.5	1.2
Warwick ..	214.3	-4.3	0.7	291.6	1.3	140.9	0.5

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Groceries.

Again in the March quarter, the food and grocery section of the index recorded a considerable decrease, being on the average for all cities almost 3 per cent. lower than for the previous quarter. The continued fall in quarterly average potato and onion prices in all six Queensland cities provided the main reason for this decrease, more than offsetting smaller price rises in bread, tea, jam, eggs, and milk.

Clothing and Footwear.

The clothing and footwear group recorded a consistently steady rise in each of the six cities. Men's and boys' suits and women's and boys' footwear were the main items to increase in price.

Miscellaneous.

All cities again showed increases in the miscellaneous group, the main causes being higher gas charges in Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville, while there were also small increases in other miscellaneous items.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

This index increased in Brisbane (1.2 per cent.), Townsville (1.9 per cent.), and Bundaberg (5.0 per cent.), but remained unchanged in the other three cities.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts for the various Queensland cities, required in March quarter, 1957, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{3}{4}$	19	11		1	0	2	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$
Rockhampton	1	0	4	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	11 $\frac{1}{2}$
Townsville ..	1	1	1	1	1	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	2	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	11 $\frac{1}{4}$
Bundaberg ..	19	10	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	2	16	3	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	2	1	0	8 $\frac{3}{4}$
Warwick ..	19	9	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	14	10	4	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	6 $\frac{1}{2}$

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth industrial authority suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Following applications for the resumption of automatic adjustments and an increase in the basic wage, the basic wage for males in all States was increased by 10s. from June, 1956, and again by 10s. from May, 1957, but on each occasion restoration of the quarterly adjustments was refused.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September and December quarters of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females on each occasion. During the next five quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded three small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage. From June quarter, 1955, to December quarter, 1956, adjustments to compensate for price increases were made in all quarters except two, the increases aggregating 16s. for males and 11s. 6d. for females. In the latest quarter, a reduction of 2s. was applied to the male rate, but no change was made in the female rate.

The New South Wales Industrial Commission suspended quarterly basic wage adjustments from August, 1953, but resumed them in November, 1955, with the addition of the full amount indicated by the rise in the index number during the period of suspension. In the most recent quarter, a decrease of 2s. for adult males in Sydney followed the application of the index number. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, automatic adjustments were continued under special legislation until June quarter, 1956, after which they were suspended. In South Australia, the State basic wage was adjusted as from 20th May, 1957, by the addition of 10s. per week for adult males and 7s. for adult females, bringing it to the same level as the newly declared Commonwealth rate. The Western Australian Court of Arbitration made no adjustment to the basic wage after July, 1953, until August, 1955, when an increase was made on account of price rises in the June quarter. Six subsequent increases have been made, the latest of which operated from 26th April, 1957, the rise for adult males in Perth being 2s. 7d. In Tasmania, quarterly adjustments were suspended from August, 1953, to February, 1956, when the total increase, amounting to 17s. in Hobart, due to rises in the index number during the period of suspension, was added. Adjustments were made in the next two quarters, but the State Wages Boards decided to suspend automatic adjustments for a trial period thereafter.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index.				Common-wealth Basic Wage.			State Basic Wage.						
	Dec. Quarter, 1956.		March Quarter, 1957.		Males. ^a			Males.			Females.			Date of Operation. ^b
	A	B	A	B										
					£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Brisbane	2355	2305	2321	2330	11	18	0	11	19	0	8	2	6	29. 4. 57
Sydney ..	2624	2578	2604	2602	13	3	0	13	8	0	10	1	0	May, 1957
Melbourne	2603	2519	2546	2536	12	15	0	13	3	0	9	17	0	Aug., 1956c
Adelaide	2497	2424	2432	2434	12	11	0	12	11	0	9	8	0	20. 5. 57
Perth ..	2690	2681	2714	2708	12	16	0	13	8	10	8	14	9	26. 4. 57
Hobart ..	2712	2659	2688	2685	13	2	0	13	12	0	10	4	0	Aug., 1956c

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

a Operative first pay-period beginning on or after 1st May, 1957. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage is actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed until August, 1953. For later adjustments, see above.

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BRISBANE.

14th May, 1957.

The "C" Series Retail Price Index.

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended Dec., 1956.	Year Ended March, 1957.	Quarter Ended -				
				March, 1956.	June, 1956.	Sept., 1956.	Dec., 1956.	March, 1957.
1. Aggregate - All Groups.								
Brisbane	863	2316	2331	2260	2299	2370	2335	2321
Toowoomba	851	2356	2372	2295	2343	2404	2382	2358
Rockhampton	861	2346	2362	2296	2327	2392	2370	2360
Townsville	912	2434	2448	2388	2424	2478	2444	2447
Bundaberg	841	2293	2307	2250	2280	2326	2317	2304
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	2328	2343	2274	2312	2380	2347	2334
Warwick	822	2312	2323	2256	2301	2357	2332	2300
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane	863	2272	2296	2234	2263	2287	2305	2330
Toowoomba	851	2309	2336	2266	2303	2320	2348	2372
Rockhampton	861	2303	2328	2265	2288	2319	2341	2364
Townsville	912	2393	2418	2357	2389	2406	2421	2454
Bundaberg	841	2248	2270	2222	2240	2249	2279	2311
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	2284	2308	2246	2275	2298	2317	2343
Warwick	822	2264	2285	2229	2261	2274	2293	2311
3. Food and Groceries.								
Brisbane	856	2719	2720	2628	2684	2853	2711	2631
Toowoomba	814	2791	2794	2693	2764	2905	2801	2705
Rockhampton	895	2724	2716	2677	2698	2814	2708	2644
Townsville	955	2846	2837	2800	2825	2946	2812	2764
Bundaberg	903	2753	2742	2695	2724	2843	2748	2652
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	2734	2733	2650	2701	2859	2725	2646
Warwick	846	2784	2776	2693	2765	2901	2778	2659
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane	856	2598	2623	2554	2585	2624	2628	2655
Toowoomba	814	2660	2693	2612	2651	2673	2705	2743
Rockhampton	895	2601	2616	2589	2587	2606	2620	2649
Townsville	955	2731	2748	2711	2725	2743	2745	2779
Bundaberg	903	2622	2635	2617	2610	2625	2637	2669
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	2612	2636	2573	2599	2634	2640	2669
Warwick	846	2652	2669	2619	2651	2667	2669	2687
5. Clothing and Footwear.								
Brisbane	829	3152	3177	3128	3134	3155	3192	3225
Toowoomba	829	3166	3199	3121	3152	3176	3214	3252
Rockhampton	845	3162	3198	3124	3129	3166	3228	3267
Townsville	840	3184	3210	3160	3167	3183	3226	3262
Bundaberg	839	3179	3204	3151	3170	3170	3223	3252
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	831	3157	3183	3130	3138	3160	3199	3234
Warwick	825	3156	3181	3132	3142	3159	3190	3231

(a) Excluded as from September quarter, 1955.